

The American MUSIC LOVER

The Record Connoisseur's Magazine



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Edited by PETER HUGH REED

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COLUMBIA  MASTERWORKS

The American MUSIC LOVER

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Editorial Notes

We are indebted to J. R. Hinsey of Ottumwa, Iowa, for an interesting letter which has given us food for thought and reason for discourse. Here is the letter:

"The February issue of your delightful magazine arrived yesterday—having read it from cover to cover, may I talk shop with you on a few subjects?

"1. I disagree with your unfavorable comment on Victor's resonant recording of *The Planets*—this sonorous quality adds a decided spaciousness to the music. In fact, I like these differences in hall resonance because they individualize orchestral recordings — underlining the significance of Toronto vs. Chicago vs. Boston, etc.

"2. I think Victor should be congratulated on the very noticeable improvement in their record surfaces.

"3. Along the same line, I think Victor should be commended for its unusual publications at this time—music off the beaten track, filling great gaps in the repertoire. I can remember articles back in 1939 in which you pleaded for such works as Debussy's *Gigues* and *Ronde de printemps*, and yet when now they appear your review disparages the musical content of these very same works. If the less familiar works create your solicitation for recording, then surely the musical content should have been worthy of the plea. Getting back to *The Planets*—here's another case

in point—on the one hand you criticize Victor because they issue only four parts of the seven-part suite, and then, on the other hand, you feature an article lambasting Holst's lack of inspiration, and the absence of any lasting value in the work as music. I agree with those writers who contend that musicologists err greatly in criticizing Handel because he wasn't Bach —Tchaikovsky because he wasn't Brahms —and Schubert because he wasn't Beethoven.

"Well, I have already said too much, so I will sign off with kindest regards and best wishes for your continued success."

In the good old days, when we had a normal complement of contributing editors, we frequently had valuable discussions of music pro and con. We have always regarded differences of opinion as stimulating to writers on music. Although few so-called music critics will admit it, differences of opinion have often helped shape their reviews. This is to say that their original ideas have been greatly altered, but rather to point out that differences of opinion have not infrequently helped them to clarify their own ideas and—one suspects—on occasion have kept them from being intolerant. The writer on music should indulge in frequent discussions with his friends and others. An

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informal colloquy on music often broadens one's perceptions and views. An English writer once said: "The art of good living, good talking, and good writing is discursiveness."

In taking up a difference of opinion with Mr. Hinsey, we do not seek to prove a case, but rather feel an urge to discourse further upon the subjects about which he writes in so friendly a spirit.

We have always welcomed sonority in a recording; it lends realism and definite character. But when that sonority resorts in over-lapping tones which destroy the music's line and rhythmic structure, it cannot be regarded as satisfactory. The tones in the old recordings of the Vienna Philharmonic, which conveyed an "echoey" quality, never over-lapped like those in the new recording of *The Planets*. This over-lapping of sound causes distinct confusion; it is almost a three-second continuance of tone, resulting in harmonies already dissolved by the composer being continually mixed with others to the distinct blurring of the composer's intentions. But let us quote from another letter, which presents an entirely different viewpoint. It is from our valued friend and musical colleague, Henry S. Gerstlé, of New York City. Mr. Gerstlé writes:

"Have recently heard a review set of *The Planets*, and to say that MacMillan has done a great disservice to the composer is putting it mildly. He has stressed the weaker elements of the music (and there are many such) while the spirit of the music has entirely eluded him. Abetted by raucous recording and bad balance, this in my opinion is a most unsatisfactory recording. Compare the interpretations with those of the composer and note the disservice done." Only one unaware of the composer's intentions would express a hope that MacMillan record the balance of the suite.

We could quote from several letters from Canadian readers, but we'll content ourselves with a sentence from a letter of Dr. Hiltz, of Whitewood, Saskatchewan: "It is difficult to separate interpretation or musical intent from the confused recording sound of the new issue of Holst's *The Planets*." For those who

would hear this music played to best advantage we recommend the old set which the composer made nearly a decade and half ago (Columbia set 359—the recording, incidentally, is surprisingly good for its time).

Regarding the article on Holst by Mr. Norwood, this was not intended to be derogatory; it was exactly what its title conveyed—an effort to sum up the case of Holst. The author's contention that the music does not wear well is a point that others can hardly criticize until they have lived with the music for a long time. Near the end of that article, the author quoted opinions both for and against the music; surely nothing could have been fairer.

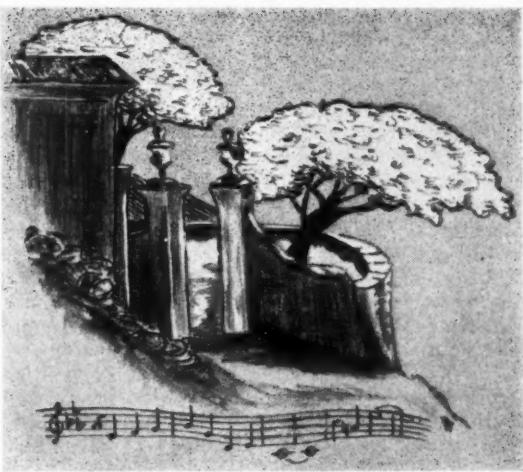
We have noted an improvement in the surface of recent Victor recordings, and there is reason to believe that this improvement will continue to manifest itself.

Debussy's *Gigues* and *Ronde de printemps* open up another point for discussion. (Parenthetically, we might state we have been unable to find where we pleaded for the recording of these works.) To ask for recordings of music "off the beaten track" is the privilege of every musical enthusiast. Most of us have been greatly impressed, at one time or another, by performances of less well-known works in the concert hall. Sometimes, after an intervening period of years, we re-encounter music which we previously admired greatly only to find that our tastes have altered; a difference in reaction that is always somewhat of a shock. No one needs to apologize for the change in his taste; we either progress in artistic appreciation or retrogress, we hardly stand still in such matters. We too think Victor should be commended for its unusual publications at this time. *Gigue* may appeal to many for the reason outlined in a paragraph from another letter from a reader.

"The statement that the theme of *Gigues* may have derived from an English folksong is very close. It is identical with an Irish jig or reel that an Irish servant used to sing to me about fifty years ago.

(Continued on page 176)

The American Music Lover



"Loveliest of trees the cherry now is hung with bloom along the bough"

GEORGE BUTTERWORTH

AN ENGLISH POET-MUSICIAN

By W. R. Anderson

In our January issue we carried a review of the English recording of Butterworth's orchestral rhapsody *A Shropshire Lad*, little expecting that our friendly colleague in England, W. R. Anderson, would be contributing an article on the composer in so short a time. A while back we suggested to Mr. Anderson that he write us an article on Butterworth, but time passed and since we had no word from him we presumed that other and more urgent matters prevented him from complying with our request. Some may think that we are overstressing the im-

portance of Butterworth, yet those of us who still return to the poems of A. E. Housman and Rupert Brooke (the latter one of the talented young killed in the last war) will perhaps be interested in our surveys of Butterworth and in the possibility of hearing his music in reproduction. Leopold Stokowski, as an indirect result of our review, saw fit to play the rhapsody in a recent program on the air. And several readers were kind enough to write us that they were considerably impressed with the review and with the music.—Editor.

* * *

At the editor's kind invitation I say a little about a typical aspect of British music, not too strongly represented on

records. It is an aspect with many of the American soldiers now in England may meet via radio programs or in their ming-

ling with musical folks here.

The composers of whom I am thinking were all part of a lost generation—lost in the last war; yet their leaven is persistent. Their interests, one might even say their passions, permanently influence our music, despite all fashions. It is the passion for English countryside: the romantic spirit of a century ago, translated into terms which we English feel are as truly English as those of Shubert and Schumann were Austrian and German. Perhaps these national and local flavors tend to be evanescent to foreigners. We in England, for example, still do our best to enjoy Bruckner as Austrians do; but he mostly evades us. We know the difficulty in exploiting Elgar to France—perhaps to most other nations too. Elgar, I am given to understand, has attained some popularity in America, but by no means as much as he deserves. I anticipate considering him later in the year, if the editor has space.

A Talented Group

But to return to that generation of young men who lost their lives in 1914-18—to that talented group of young composers who had only half a chance. Likely, you in America remember many promising or maturing musicians of the same period who were swallowed up in what we then blindly visualized as "the war to end all wars." As one who was in it, and who left part of an arm in France, I have had intense sympathy with these young men, and I try to feel equally for the present generation of soldier-musicians, some of whom we shall inevitably lose.

Typical representatives of that last-war-lost band were George Butterworth, Ernest Farrar, Purcell Warren, the cellist; William Baines, the piano writer; F. S. Kelly, pianist and oarsman; Ivor Gurney, the song-writer, and Denis Browne. I mention only a handful. They are remembered only by a few today—mainly by those who knew them, for not even all of them are listed in musical dictionaries; two only, so far as I know, are represented in recordings: Butterworth, in his *Shropshire Lad* song cycle and his *Shropshire Lad* rhapsody, and Gurney, by a few songs.

The title of Butterworth's rhapsody may stand for the heart of their feeling—though of course there were diverse other impulses, most of them derivative. Butterworth's *Shropshire Lad* compositions were the most natural, direct and cordial. Yet, Housman's book of poems, so entitled, was shot through with a pessimism related to the Greeks. (One notes in this connection that most of the young men had been educated classically.) In Housman's poems which deal with the vicissitudes of friendship, the ruthlessness and beauty of nature, the passing of youth, and the vanity of human desires, we find the spirit of the group. The music of the Butterworth songs is melodious and simple, just as the verses are. And akin to the poetry they appeal alike to the sophisticated and unsophisticated. There are records of the song cycle, expressively sung by the baritone, Roy Henderson, with Gerald Moore at the piano (English Decca M506-07). Hearing these fine recordings of Butterworth's exquisite settings of the Housman poems, wherein, as Alec Robertson said in his review (viz. November 1941 issue of *The Gramophone*), the composer "more than anyone caught the true spirit of the words," one does indeed once more "regret more than ever before his [Butterworth's] untimely death."

Killed in Action

Lt. George Butterworth, who was killed at Pozières in 1916, aged thirty-one (after having twice won the Military Cross), delighted in folk song and dance. And, he put his best work into music thus evoked, rather into "classical" models. He responded to Housman's songs of mortality and man's sense of exile from his spiritual home with zest and deep emotion, and that simple-hearted readiness which characterized so much of these young men. Sometimes one realizes that the simplicity approaches the banal: there is, even in the biggest British composers, a vein (little recognized or conceded by the British people) of simple-mindedness, less artistically valuable than simple-heartedness. At time, as in the extreme "folky" composers, I think it weakens the entire artistic sense, and in such conditions I

find it tiresome. The young men of whom I am thinking rarely feel thus. If they had lived, they might have developed great riches of expression, even of power; but few of them enjoyed a working life in music of more than a decade. The ages of the group named above varied from 21 to 47, and over a larger group the average is under thirty.

The *Shropshire Lad* poems sang of an earlier generation of lost youth as the "lads who will never grow old." Perhaps in the between-the-wars period, with its false dawns and oncoming twilights, they tended to fade from memory; but we need the reminder of their happy faith, their unfaltering courage as well as despair. Housman's poems had for them the appeal which, a century before, those of Goethe and Heine had for young German romantics. And yet, Housman's poems, despite theirs romantic qualities, are as classical as the Greek Anthology.

Wrote Little Music

Butterworth wrote, naturally, very little music; after graduating from Eton, Oxford and the Royal College of Music, he became active in the movement for the revival of English folk-song and dance. He collected and arranged folk-airs (he enjoyed dancing to them), wrote a few carols and other choral pieces, and a couple of orchestral idylls, the first designated as "rhapsody" and entitled *A Shropshire Lad*, the other *The Banks of Green Willow*. These latter date from 1913 and 1914. In each of the orchestral compositions we find the mingled sweetness and sorrow of nature; the former uses as its basis a theme from one of his settings of Housman, about the "Loveliest of trees, the cherry now is hung with bloom alone the bough."

This rhapsody is recorded (H.M.V. C3287) by the Hallé Orchestra of Manchester, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult, friend of many of the young men mentioned, and perhaps our most sympathetic conductor of such folk-inspired work.

There is an aggressive and an unaggressive nationalism. Many of us feel that the latter type of affectionate music on country sights, sounds and impressions, bred in the bone, is the kind that ought

to be exported, rather than any attempted exaltation of national history. For the most part exaltation of national history is the story of aggression: though real fights for freedom ought to inspire others, wherever they dwell. Yet the true power of music seems to lie in unifying; and we all have our countryside roots, however they may be buried beneath city sidewalks that run where once the grass grew green and rich.

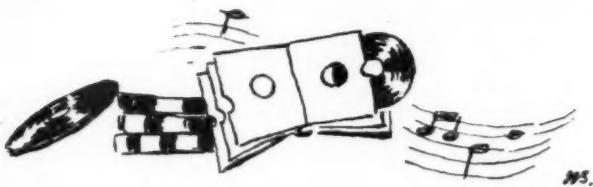
There is another reason why one would like to have others enjoy such music: it might serve to show another side of Britain than that which friendly foreigners find in the bravura of that turn-of-the century spirit wherein, they are apt to suspect, the brass of Imperialism shrewdly blows. As regards Elgar, the easiest mark for this criticism, I aim to say a word in a latter article, by trying to show how much truth there may be in such ideas. But the music of the young men—the lost generation of another war, of whom I am thinking—is almost always pacific, though not weak. They had faith, but they knew of life's frustration, though none could foresee the extremity of tragedy to which they were to come—victims of war. The poetic spirit is not superficial: the true poet is a diviner—he knows.

The Poet-Musician

To go back to Butterworth, who died too young—but who being a poet divined much—and who had he lived longer unquestionably would have grown in variety of expression, in scope and detail, in richness and significance, what work he left us is the expression of reflective youth. It is sensitive, full of compassion and sympathy, and strong and true like the spirit of Housman and the English countryside which inspired its utterance.

The *Shropshire Lad* rhapsody is native English art touched by the most natural of influences of its day—that of French impressionism. Debussy opened the door for our men, as he did for some of yours—Griffes, for example. Later, Delius entered into that house of many mansions and explored some of them in ways that by 1914 were only just beginning to be followed.

(Continued on page 180)



SOME ASPECTS OF ITALIAN RECORDINGS

By Leo Goldstein

I

There are two distributors of German Polydor records in Italy. The first company, known as Fonit, derives its trade name from the full name of the concern, Fonodisco Italiano Trevisan. Its main offices were located at Via Maurizio Gonzaga, 4, Milan. As in England and America, Polydor discs emerge as a step-child of the record industry in Italy. An original series of Polydor records, made in Germany, was distributed in Italy by Cetra for some time around 1942. The first Fonit - Polydor were released, however, some time in 1938. Prices for the re-pressings were at first pretty much the same as original Polydors, but they climbed thereafter slowly and steadily and attained their peak when with the November December 1942 releases a new series (96000s) was born with a price of 46 lire. Kempff's performance of Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto* was one of the first releases of this series.

Many of the early releases of Fonit-Polydor are familiar to record connoisseurs, since they have been imported to the States and have been reviewed there by several periodicals. Some of the later releases, most of which are practically unknown to American record buyers, are of great interest and in some cases of considerable importance. Curiously, there is a dearth of modern music.

Another series of Polydor re-pressings was instituted by Cetra shortly before June

1942. These will be discussed later. For some reason, both Fonit and Cetra issued Polydor re-pressings simultaneously, month by month, as far as I know up until June, 1943. At the same time Fonit went ahead building a catalogue of its own, independent of the Polydor releases, drawing for its talent from native Italian artists and orchestras. This series was begun shortly after August 1941.

The classical selections in this latter series are, in the case of the singers, mostly from standard Italian operas. The songs, of the most sentimental genre, are all the familiar popular ones which Italian operatic singers inevitably voice, like Leoncavallo's *Mattinata*, Toselli's *Serenade*, etc.

There are four featured sopranos, Fulvia Trevisani, Pia Tassinari, Luisa Licini and Eugenia Toller. Judging from the records offered one gains the impression that Tassinari and Licini had a following. Arturo Ferrara, and Fernando Orlandi, tenors, have the largest list of selections, including selections from operas of Puccini, Boito, Giordano, Mascagni, Rossini, Massenet and Donizetti. There are five other tenors, but none whose names are familiar to American listeners.

The orchestral recordings by Alberto Seprini and the La Scala Orchestra, and by Giovanni Fratini and an unnamed symphony, are all of operatic selections. The largest list of orchestral records is made by Attilio Parelli and the La Scala Orchestra. The selections are all familiar ones from Mascagni, Herold, Liszt, Verdi, Wag-

ner, Catalani, Ponchielli, and Auber. One could easily guess by seeing the composer's names what the conductor played, since the selections are the most popular ones. Perhaps no other conductor has as many recordings of the Rossini overtures to his credit as Parelli. These include: *Barber of Seville* (disc 35022); *Semiramide* (3 parts) with *La Traviata—Prelude Act III* (Verdi) (35025, 6); *Italiana in Algeri* (35027); *La Gazza Ladra* (35028); *William Tell* (35029/30); *L'Assedio di Corinto* (35031); *Cenerentola* (35032); *Tancredi* (35033).

Looking over the Polydor recordings, issued by Fonit as well as by Cetra, one finds a group of them made by Italian artists in Germany. How much interchange of artists there was between the two countries I can not say, but undoubtedly the pact between Germany and Italy was indorsed artistically as well as politically. In the 1941 catalogue there are lists of records made by American dance bands and vocalists, such as the Andrew Sisters, Connie Boswell, Mills Bros., Bing Crosby, Louis Armstrong, Bob Crosby, Chick Webb, Jimmy Dorsey, Paul Whiteman, Milt Hertz Quartet, Guy Lombardo, Casa Loma, Joe Venuti, Count Basie, Jimmie Lunceford and many others. All of these are cut from the 1942 catalogue. Fascism, unlike Democracy, banished the music of its enemies.

An Italian Conductor In Germany

In the 1941 catalogue, there is a series of recordings made by the Italian conductor Victor de Sabata with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Several of these, the Brahms *Fourth*, *Tristan and Isolde—Prelude and Love-Death*, and Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration*, are known to American record buyers; they are listed in the *Gramophone Shop Encyclopedia*. Two other sets, however, Kodaly's *Dances from Galanta* and Respighi's *Feste Romane*, are not included there. In the 1942 catalogue, including releases up to January 1, 1942, we find a series of recordings by the Italian soprano Maria Gentile, made with the Berlin State Orchestra. The selections, all issued by Fonit, include arias from Bellini's *La Sonnambula* (disc 61017), Donizetti's *Lucia—Quando rapita in estasi* and *Don Pasquale—So anch'io la virtu magica*

(61018), Verdi's *La Traviata—Addio del passato* and *Rigoletto—Caro nome* (61069), and Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia—Una voce poco fa* (61070). There is also a record by the Metropolitan baritone Alexander Sved, made with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Clemens Krauss conducting, of *Par siamo!* and *Cortigiani* from Verdi's *Rigoletto* (disc 91035). Giuseppe Lugo, the tenor, is also represented by a list mostly of Italian operatic arias sung in French; these undoubtedly are the same records that the tenor made for Polydor in Paris (incidentally a Swiss concern, not directly connected with the German one).

A Highly Talented Conductor

There is also a list of recordings by the young conductor Herbert von Karajan and the Berlin State Opera Orchestra and the Berlin Philharmonic. Von Karajan was regarded by many as the most talented conductor in Germany before the war. Whether justified or not, his admirers claimed he was on a par with Toscanini and Furtwangler. His series of recordings made with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra are already known to American listeners, all with the exception of the *Preludes to Acts 1 and 3* of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* being listed in the record encyclopedia already mentioned. With the Berlin Philharmonic, von Karajan made a recording of the *Pathétique Symphony* of Tchaikovsky (discs 91130-135).

Evidence of Italy's friendship with Japan is furnished by the inclusion of Hidemaro Konoye's Polydor recording, made with the Berlin Philharmonic, of Mussorgsky's *Night on the Bare Mountain*.

Beginning with 1942, the prices of Polydor re-pressings rose to a new level. 10-inch discs previously listed at 18 lire now became 23.90 lire, and 12-inch discs formerly priced at 28 lire were advanced to 38 lire. The new series, 96000s, already mentioned, was issued at 46 lire.

In May-June, 1942, a new recording of Mozart's E flat *Symphony*, K. 543 played by Leopold Ludwig and the Berlin Philharmonic is listed (discs 91138-140), and there is also a recording of the Johann Strauss *Emperor Waltzes* by von Karajan and the same orchestra (91136). In the

July-August list, there is a recording of the familiar *Sinfonia in B flat major* by J. C. Bach, played by Walther Gmeindl and Orchestra of the City of Berlin (96075-76), and a new recording of the *Waltzes from Act 3* of Richard Strauss's *Rosenkavalier* made by the Bavarian State Orchestra, directed by the composer (96077).

In the September-October list there is a new recording of Mozart's *Piano Concerto in D minor, K. 466* by Wilhelm Kempff, Paul van Kempen and the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra (96083/86s), and one of Wolf's *Italian Serenade* played by Paul Schmitz and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Chamber Orchestra (91148). In the November-December list appear Kempff's performance of Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto* and Furtwängler's recordings of *Ballet Music No. 2* and *Entr'acte No. 2* from Schubert's *Rosamunde*, both familiar to American record buyers.

In the January-February 1943 list appears a recording of Haydn's *Symphony No. 92 in G major (Oxford)* by Gmeindl and the Berlin Philharmonic (96089-92). A list of Haydn's symphonies is also an-

nounced as in the offing. There is also a new recording of Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*, played by the Bavarian State Orchestra under the direction of the composer (96096-100).

At this time there appears in the supplements a heading SPECIAL NOTICE, "Announced for Imminent Publication by Fonit-Polydor: Johann Sebastian Bach—*The Passion According to Saint Matthew*, performed by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra with soloists and the Bruno Kittel Choir, under the direction of Bruno Kittel."

This is the last of the Fonit - Polydor recordings I have been able to find. It is, of course, doubtful whether any more news will emanate from this source in the near future. However, should the unexpected happen, I shall give that information in the future. In passing it might be noted that all of the fine discs made for Polydor by Alexander Borowsky have been excised from the catalogue, which is but a small indication of the Hitlerian influence on Italy.

(To be continued)

EDITORIAL NOTES

(Continued from page 170)

It must have been fairly well known, as I recall that the hand-organs of my childhood used to purvey it to the then populous Irish element in New York. I believe I have since found it printed in Petrie or Flood, but I do not recall the title."

The few performances the work has received in our concert halls have never elicited any cordial response from critics. *Gignes* does not seem to us to be first-rate Debussy, but *Ronde de printemps* owns a characteristic charm; nevertheless we can only repeat that "neither of these works stirs the imagination or satisfies the senses like *Iberia*." This does not say that they are completely without appeal; the nature or extent of that appeal, how-

ever, will vary with the listener.

Not being one who is given to criticize one composer because he is not like another, we do not feel impelled to argue about the final part of Mr. Hinsey's letter.

Anyone who has followed this magazine for any length of time must realize that we have few prejudices of this sort, and that serious music competently written engages our earnest and unbiased attention, no matter what style it represents. As a matter of fact, we have been reproached with having *too* catholic a taste. It is a reproach we are willing to endure.

* * *

The period of the Chamber Music Survey begun in last month's installment is, of course, 1600 to 1750—not 1700 to 1850.

The American Music Lover



A SURVEY OF FRENCH LIGHT MUSIC

By Jerome Pastene

I.

It is a common fault of virtually all surveys of French music written in English that they confine themselves exclusively to the output of French composers of the more serious type, and ignore the works of the lighter school of French musicians. It is perhaps symptomatic of British-American music-lovers and musicologists that they distrust the light and airy, and will accord respect only to the profound. And yet *opéra-bouffe* and *opéra-comique* are as integral a part of the spirit of France as are the most profound works that country has produced. The Gallic mind has always recognized that fact, but in our own countries much that is musically typical of France has been ignored. Yet I know of no better illustration of the importance of French light music than to say that for my home-movies of Paris, taken during happier years, I have found nothing to equal the Offenbach-Rosenthal *Gaieté Parisienne*, which fits these scenes as perfectly as does Grétry's music my scenes of the gardens of Versailles. Both, in the French mind, are equally important. Without Paris, France would not be the country it is; without Offenbach, and his kindred composers, the Paris we once knew would never have come into being. They were a manifestation of their day

and way of living. The music is the essence of the spirit of the city.

Just as Johann Strauss II overshadowed all other Viennese composers of his genre, including his own father and brothers (see *A Discography of Johann Strauss*, *AMI*, Sept. 1942), so did Offenbach rule the world of light music in the era of the Third Empire, whose brittle, extravagant and effervescent glory he so brilliantly recreated in music. Yet Offenbach is no unique or even unusual manifestation. He was preceded by Adam, Auber, Boieldieu, Dalayrac, Grétry and Hérold, paralleled in point of time by Godard, Thomas and Waldteufel, and followed by Hahn, Ibert and a host of minor luminaries.

André Grétry (1741-1813) was the first of these great figures in light music. Typifying the studied elegance, the "comedy of manners" of the late 18th century in France, his *opéras-comiques* were in their day greatly favored and frequently heard. With the Revolution, the society that had created them and that alone appreciated them disappeared, as did the works themselves. Grétry wrote for republican France, but the elegance of his style ill-suited the new world in which he found himself. Of recent years, the dance movements from his operettas have obtained new birth in the form of orchestral suites and ballets, in treatments compar-

able to the Beecham suites from Handel's operas. These works, of course, were operettas in the pure sense of the word—little operas; they were not, for all their light and artificial libretti, at all similar to the modern operetta form. The most noteworthy of the suites arranged from Grétry operas is the *Danses Villageoises*, on music drawn from *Colinette à la Cour*, *L'Epreuve Villageoise*, *L'Embarras de Richesse*, and other productions. Here is light music of broad imagination, delicacy and charm. There is a good performance, somewhat marred by rough recording, of the *Danses Villageoises* by Ruhlmann and unnamed symphony orchestra (CX-126.)

There is, in addition, a ballet suite arranged and recorded by Selmar Meyrowitz and a symphony orchestra (C. 17067/8), titled *La Rosière Républicaine*. Here is a highly sympathetic performance of excellent material, well recorded. (There is an interesting story behind this music, written during the French Revolution, which Mr. Reed has already told—see the A.M.L. for July 1936.) Finally, there is a recent single disc, recorded by Fabien Sevitzky and the Philadelphia String Sinfonietta (V. 13590) of a Pantomime, Tambourin and Marche de la Caravanne from *Denyo le Tyrant*. The Pantomime, a graceful air, *quasi-menuetto*, is especially cherishable. It remains only to say that the playing of this group, drawn from the Philadelphia Orchestra, is appropriately light and beautifully recorded.

Four Leaders

Four composers dominated French *opéra-comique* in the early part of the 19th century—François Boieldieu (1775-1834), Adolphe Adam (1803-1856), Louis Hérold (1782-1833), and Daniel François Auber (1782-1871). Today, the works of Boieldieu and Adam, save for infrequent French performances, are almost entirely forgotten. Adam, whose famous *Le Postillon de Longjumeau* was once on everyone's lips and whose *Si j'étais Roi* was almost equally popular, is now remembered almost solely as composer of the saccharine *Cantique de Noël—O Holy Night*. Boieldieu's *Le Caliph de Bagdad* and *La Dame Blanche* were once regularly mounted, but

these scores now gather dust on library shelves.

As for Hérold, who does not at once associate his name with band concerts and the Overture to *Zampa?* Like Boieldieu and Adam, his was a talent limited strictly to his own day. Hérold died very young. He might perhaps have grown, but this is doubtful, for what he did write is too much the common coin of its time. His only other major work, *Le Pré aux Clercs*, is now completely forgotten.

Aubert's music, too, was of the obvious sort, but with a sufficient touch of originality to insure permanence at least for some of the orchestral sections. Thus, while the operas themselves are no longer heard, Aubert's overtures to these works remain on the "Pops" variety of symphony programs. Ever-popular is his overture to *La Muette de Portici*, better known to the Anglo-Saxon world as the *Masaniello Overture*. Here is music typical of its day—light, frothy and insouciant, but lacking both the grace of Grétry and the wit of Offenbach. So did the bourgeois monarchy of Louis-Philippe lack the elegance of his Bourbon forbears and the cynical humor of the second Empire which followed. There are several recordings of *Masaniello*. Only one merits serious attention—the exuberant performance by Sir Adrian Boult and the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra (V. 11838).

His Best Overtures

Less well-known, but better, are Aubert's overtures to three other *opéras-comiques*—*Le Cheval de Bronze*, *Les Diamants de la Couronne*, and *Fra Diavolo*. Here there is greater spontaneity, a more openly light touch, none of the attempt at "consequential" music that makes *Masaniello* heavy-handed and studied. Constant Lambert and the London Philharmonic Orchestra have recorded all three—*Le Cheval de Bronze* (V. 12511), *Les Diamants de la Couronne* (V. 12806), *Fra Diavolo* (HMV. C.3084). All are bright, infectious performances in which interesting readings are thoroughly carried out by a splendid orchestra. The only interesting American listing of *Fra Diavolo* is by Julius Harrison and the Hastings Philharmonic Orchestra (D.

25642), a zestful treatment that is regrettably obscured by typically poor American Decca reproduction, pressings and surfaces.

In an American discography of Auber, it remains only to mention briefly Bidu Sayao's graceful voicing (unfortunately with piano accompaniment) of *L'Eclat de rire* from *Manon Lescaut* (V. 1904), to which Mr. Reed has already referred in his *Survey of Opera Arias*, Part 3 (AML, March 1943).

Two names not commonly associated with French light music are those of Hector Berlioz (1803-69) and Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848). Yet both need to be included in this chronology, Berlioz for his *opéra-comique*, *Béatrice et Bénédict*, and Donizetti for his inescapably French light opera, *La Fille du Régiment*. Of the former, there is the superb performance by that master of the Berlioz idiom, Sir Hamilton Harty, conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra (C. 68342-D). Despite the aging recording processes, which sound less brilliant today than they did when this record was new, the phrasing and sympathy which Harty obtains from the orchestra are not to be concealed.

A Metropolitan Revival

In 1940, one hundred years after its première in Paris, the Metropolitan Opera Company revived *La Fille du Régiment* as a special display vehicle for Lily Pons. Although the move was possibly inspired by the sympathy engendered in America by the collapse of France some months earlier, the venture was a complete artistic as well as financial success, the old play sounding remarkably fresh—with the obvious implication that our present repertoires are too austere and limited, and that other light works may have equal appeal to 20-century ears. Speaking of the Overtures to this opera, it has been aptly said that "singularity is about the only virtue" of the recording by the Grand Opera Orchestra of Milan under an unspecified conductor (D. 25082). The English Decca catalog, however, offers a spirited performance, if oldish recording, by Julius Pruewer and the Berlin Philharmonic (D. LY-6031). In addition, Colum-

bia has recorded four of the soprano arias from the opera (musically not all are of equal value), sung by Lily Pons with an accuracy of pitch and sense of style not always heard from her on records. Contained in a two-record album (CX-206), these are *Chacun le sait*, *Il faut partir*, *Par le rang et par l'opulence* (for some mysterious reason listed on the label as *Et mon cœur va changer*), and the stunning finale, *Salut à la France*, of which unfortunately, only the soprano part has been recorded, for under present world conditions, the sentiment of this section evokes a potent reaction.

Jacques Offenbach

The supreme master of French light music, however, was not a Frenchman, but a German Jew named Levy, the son of the cantor of a synagogue in Cologne. Coming to Paris as a very young man, he changed his name to that of the town from which his father originated, and became Jacques Offenbach. Unable to capture the interest of any of the directors of the all-powerful *Opéra-Comique*, he established his own little theater, the *Bouffes-Parisiens*, and there created a new form of light opera which came to be known as *opéra-bouffe*. Writing of this occurrence, H. E. Jacob observed, "He settled down quietly at a judicious distance from the comic opera which was not comic and the grand opera which was not grand and produced his delightful *Bouffes-Parisiens* . . . His first goal was the one-act opera. It was to be melodious and light and full of sweets as the *rue bonbonnières* of the previous century. The music was to satisfy, but not to satiate the hearers." Unlike the traditional *opéra-comique*, which depended upon lush sentiment and Meyerbeerian staging for its style, the new *opéra-bouffe* set for its pace upon a miniature stage the satirization of contemporary Parisian life and the *beaux-arts* in a manner that recalls vaguely the Savoyard operas, but with an incisive cynicism of which neither Gilbert nor Sullivan would have been capable.

Compelled by the Censor (acting under orders emanating indirectly from the *Opéra-Comique*) to limit his early works to no more than six characters and an

orchestra of eighteen players, Offenbach none the less succeeded in producing works that so excited the French that he was able later to enlarge his productions and his orchestra, over-riding the original edict of the Censor. One of these very early productions was *Le Mariage aux Lanternes*, the overture to which has been recorded by the Dol Dauber Salon Orchestra (V. 36168). This otherwise insignificant performance is interesting in that it employs an orchestra similar in size and disposition to that which Offenbach was at first compelled to use.

These early works—Offenbach produced in all over ninety operettas—are not the ones by which he is now remembered. The great successes—*La Belle Hélène*, *La Vie Parisienne*, *Orphée aux Enfers*, *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, and finally, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*—date from later years.

In *La Vie Parisienne*, Offenbach drew a spirited satire of the *haut monde* of Paris in the 1860's—a picture so vivid to this day that, blazing with the colors of a Toulouse-Lautrec poster, it has again played to applause-resounding houses in a production by the New Opera Company of New York. French Odéon once recorded an abridged performance on five 10-inch discs which have since been issued in America by Decca (D. 20588/93). Although the singers are by no means notable, the performance is highly spirited and enjoyable.

Orphée aux Enfers was an equal success. It was satire aimed this time at the *Opéra-Comique* itself, through the medium of a parody of the opera of classic libretto, Offenbach's inability to enter those sacred halls having stimulated his vitriolic pen. An abridged performance of considerable spirit is to be had of this (D. 20407/10), but unfortunately, this was originally recorded in Germany for German consumption, and is sung in that language. Such typically French music sounds ill at ease in the Teuton tongue. There is also the superb performance by Constant Lambert and the London Philharmonic of the Overture (V. 12604).

La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein took a crack at the Court itself, mocking its

theatricality, flash and lack of tradition. Paul Minssart and a symphony orchestra recorded a selection of numbers from this (D. 20584), but of much greater interest is the delicately French performance of the famous galop by G. Walter (not Bruno) and the Orchestra Raymonde (C. 386-M). This group plays with light touch and exuberance, and the size of the orchestra is not incompatible with that which the scoring demands. This galop is used as the Finale in the *Baller Russe's Bluebeard*; in the introduction can be traced Offenbach's inheritance from Auber, in the coda there is a breath of Rossini.

Of *La Belle Hélène*, little has reached records, but we are fortunate in having Otto Klemperer's superlative performance of the Overture (D. 25145). Despite very inferior recording and surfaces that sound like "O"-gauge sandpaper, this is a disc to be recommended. The opera itself was another satire on the classical opera form, in which Offenbach set side by side hilarious comedy, rough-and-tumble burlesque and all the delicate sentiment of which he was capable. The result has survived bad performances and the neglect of an era that has come to know only the ultra-serious or the ultra-jazzy.

(To be concluded next month)

(Continued from page 173)

In the opening call of the rhapsody one hears also an ending—the pathos of a life so soon cut short, after a few expressions of joy in its hopes. The emotion rises and falls: a few short themes, graceful as the cherry tree, a climatic middle section, and a reminder of the opening call. There is an intensity of feeling that does not seek to interpret the whole of Housman's poem, but the spirit of the tender, half-sad remembrance of the years of youth, that "will not come again"; but seen by one not yet old. The composer's art avoids the rawness of youthful emotion, but leaves the bloom on the music: those delicate woodwind breathings will appeal, surely, to every lover of poetic, romantic evocations, and leave, beside the impress of their affection for the aspect of nature that helps men to live, a poignant sense of the human loss that man's blindness perpetuates.



CHICAGO'S DISC-AND-NEEDLE CLUB

By F. Harry Kramer

Chicago's Disc-and-Needle Club has recently celebrated its tenth anniversary. It has the distinction of being the only group of its kind in Chicago. According to Mr. Kramer, its librarian, the organization is quite unlike any similar one in the large cities of this country, since it stresses fellowship at its meetings. What the Disc-and-Needle Club has done to make eventful the free hours of our men in the Armed Forces cannot be told in a few words. Like those worthy citizens of Denver, Colorado, who have consistently entertained the boys in service, the various members of this Chicago organization have striven to provide musical entertainment for men in uniform who enjoy the privilege of going to someone's home and of hearing fine music on a good phonograph. But it is best to let Mr. Kramer tell his own tale.—Ed.

* * *

The Disc-and-Needle Club was founded in January 1934. It might be said to have grown out of my invitations to people to spend an evening listening to recorded music in my home. Those who came were mostly musically inclined or enthusiastic listeners, and it was no surprise to find the idea of forming a club soon manifesting itself. Our purpose from the beginning was to provide regular (monthly) meetings for our members for the enjoyment of recorded music and the good fellowship attendant upon such mutual enjoyment. About a dozen musically enthui-

siastic folks attended the first meeting, which consisted of a musical program, a refreshment and social period, and a business session. (This plan is still in force at all our meetings). It was agreed that the writer would hold all offices for the first few months and that the organization should be loosely conducted. At subsequent meetings we elected one officer and ratified one article of the by-laws. By October 1934, our by-laws were completed and the club was operating smoothly.

It may be of interest to know that the opening musical number on our program was the overture to Offenbach's *Orpheus in Hades*. It set the stage for the necessary relaxation and feeling of good will all around. The first business item was a greeting from Mr. A. J. Franck of Long Island. The minutes of that first meeting failed to include the menu for the evening, but as I recall we had coffee and cakes.

Since the club was founded with such a simple object, it has never been difficult to keep it together. We have not endeavored to be an important society or a pressure group. Rather, we have been content with the music and the fellowship, and along the way have built a goodly library of recordings and scores.

The club meets once a month, on the second Friday, at the home of a member who has a reproducing instrument. Not all of our members own phonographs, but those who do not nevertheless like music and us, and we in turn like music and

them. Hence, we all get along very well together. At present there are 18 of us, and since the members are permitted to bring guests we usually have from 20 to 24 at a meeting. Several times there have been as many as 30 present. Every third month we play a "request" program. The "requests" are made in advance, and the "requesters" have to guarantee four guests for that meeting. This, of course, provides us with a larger crowd.

The members pay dues of \$3.00 a year, usually at the rate of 25 cents a month. Our guests are also required to pay 25 cents. Half of the income derived from each meeting goes into the treasury and half to the hostess for refreshments. Since the war began we have regularly invited service men from the Center, and when they come out they are admitted free of charge. Members who cannot attend a meeting always notify the hostess of the evening in order to reduce her work, and those who bring guests notify her also so that adequate refreshments are available.

The Officers of the Club

The Club now has four officers, elected each year: President, Vice-President and Treasurer, Secretary, and Librarian and Program Chairman. The duties of the officers are the usual ones, the Program Chairman making up the programs or consulting with the various hosts regarding the works to be played at their homes. The meetings start at 8:30 with a two-hour program, bisected with an intermission and interspersed with commentary by the program chairman or someone assigned especially for such talks. After the program, the refreshments and social period follow. After this comes the business meeting. We break up around midnight.

Throughout our ten years we have enjoyed music and fellowship, the latter always reflective of a true spirit of friendliness and intimacy. We have always maintained a group between 12 and 18 members, never having aimed to grow into an organization of size or influence. We believe this is why we have never separated into cliques and disintegrated, which, I understand, has been the unfortunate

fate of many larger societies particularly in the big cities.

Our organization is co-ed: it is made up of married couples and single folks from many walks of life, including musicians and students. Our age range is roughly between 20 and 40, but we have no rule on this. We have conferred honorary memberships on some who, in our opinion, have made some distinct contribution to the advancement of musical or phonographic art. So far, these include Mr. Franck, already mentioned, and Leo Kopp, a conductor of merit.

Our guests have brought us many pleasurable evenings. Some are doctors, teachers, musicians and business folks, many of whom are highly esteemed in their individual fields. The service men too are always delightful company; it has been gratifying to find that they in turn have found us so.

A Modest History

Our history is not particularly eventful; yet, there are several occasions recorded in the minutes which awaken pleasant memories. Early in our career we had a convivial meeting at the home of Alfred Frankenstein, who has since gone to San Francisco, where he is now the program editor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and critic on *The San Francisco Chronicle*. There we met some charming and intellectual people, students and teachers of the University of Chicago. There was also a meeting at the home of Dr. Victor Gonda, the eminent neurologist. Here we heard a recorded performance of Leo Kopp's score for the historical pageant *The Romance of a People*, with Mr. Kopp supplying the commentary. Here, we also partook of a delicious Hungarian menu. Then there was the meeting at Ravinia Park, where we heard a program conducted by George Szell, with Artur Schnabel playing Beethoven for us and several thousand others. Our hundredth meeting was in the form of a dinner and program at the Swedish Club. There by the fireside we had an excellent dinner in the glee club's intimate rehearsal room. We have also had some pleasant beach parties in the summer which re-awaken

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FIFTY GREAT VOCAL RECORDS

By Stephan Fassett

I.

The purpose of this series of articles is to recommend 50 outstanding vocal performances of the past, which would form the nucleus of a library of great singing on records. Only via the time-defeating phonograph could one acquire such an array of vocal artistry. The list will include some of the most distinguished names in operatic history, but no records will be recommended merely for historical importance. The actual quality of the singing has governed my choice. My aim will be to make a selected list of acoustic recordings for all lovers of fine singing.

Naturally, these selections reflect my own preferences and I do not make the claim that these are *the* 50 best acoustic recordings, but I believe they will give any open-minded listener a fairly comprehensive understanding of the standards that the singers of the past maintained. Even a casual hearing of such records as these should prove that the vocal standards of the past were much higher than the vocal standards of today.

Although I have specifically commend-ed certain recordings that I particularly admire, I have nonetheless taken into consider-ation the tastes of others, and so in all cases alternative choices have been given.

These records were made by the so-

called acoustic method of recording, but for all their mechanical faults they will be found to give surprisingly clear reproductions of the human voice. The accompaniments, it must be admitted, never equal in tonal quality those of modern electrical recordings.

Unfortunately, many of these discs are rare; practically all I have chosen are out of print. It is reasonable to believe, however, that a number of them will be made available again after the war, when such organizations as The International Record Collector's Club (IRCC) will resume ac-tivities, and when discs from the HMV Historical Catalog will be easier to import than under present conditions. Mean-while, one must rely on such sources as mail auctions and the several stores in New York City that specialize in "cut-outs."

Sopranos

1. FRANCES ALDA—*Madama Butterfly: Ancora un passo* (Puccini) Victor 64334 or 528. Recorded about 1913.

Alda, who was born in New Zealand in 1883, may not have had a reputation comparable to that of many other singers on this list, but at her best she was a very fine vocalist. She was a pupil of the famous Marchesi whose first hearing of Alda's voice prompted her to call out to her husband: "Salvatore, viens. J'ai trouvé

la nouvelle Melba." After coaching the role of Manon with Massenet, Alda made her debut in it at the Opéra Comique in 1904. She appeared in various European opera centers before coming to this country in 1908 to sing at the Metropolitan, where she was heard until 1929. Butterfly was Farrar's role at the Metropolitan, but Alda's version of the famous *Entrance Scene*, with its superb high C sharp, surpasses all others I have heard. Here the voice is unusually warm and vibrant. Alternates: *Manon Lescaut: L'oro o tarsi* (Puccini), Victor 87079 or HRS 1014; *Loreley: Ab! dunque ei m'amera* (Catalani), Victor 88325 or IRCC 111.

2. CELESTINA BONINSEGNA — *Norma: Casta Diva* (Bellini), in 2 parts on Columbia A5197 or 5034M. Recorded about 1910.

Boninsegna (Italy, 1874) apparently failed to achieve much success in this country, which is difficult to understand for any one who knows her recordings. At La Scala in Milan, however, and elsewhere in Italy, she was a great favorite, owing to her magnificent voice and intensely dramatic style. Her high notes were clear and brilliant, inclined at times toward an Italian "whiteness," and her frequent use of chest tones was arresting if not always artistic. Her Columbia *Casta Diva*, in spite of the absence of trills, has long been regarded as a record classic. Few singers of this type could command such a legato as Boninsegna achieves here; the bravura ending is remarkably well done, too. Perhaps more typical of this artist are *Pace, pace, mio Dio* (*Florza del Destino*) on Victor 92007 or HMV-DB-493, and the two *Trovatore* arias on Columbia A5194.

3. EMMA CALVE — *Ma Lisette* (18th century); *Le Printemps* (Gounod). Victor 88123 or IRCC 134. Recorded in 1908.

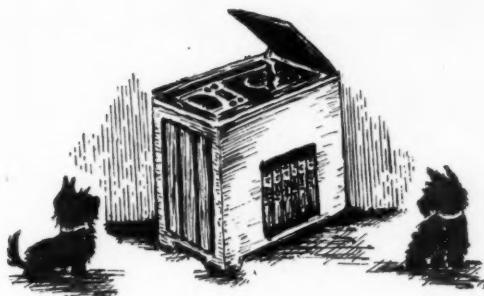
This charming and temperamental Frenchwoman, recognized as the greatest Santuzza of her day, was such a magnificent actress that her purely vocal accomplishments are sometimes slighted by operatic historians. Her voice was a superb instrument trained to a degree unknown in our time, which enabled her

to sing a remarkable variety of roles—coloratura, dramatic soprano and mezzo. Indeed, she seemed to have a different voice to match each of her characterizations, for she was a master of the art of tonal coloring. Consequently, it is impossible to single out one record and say: "This is the Calvé voice." Her two 12-inch *Carmen* solos, her *Pearl of Brazil* and *Cavalleria Rusticana* arias, one of her several single-faced versions of *Old Folks at Home* (all with the same number) and *The Three Little Songs for Very Little Children* (*Frère Jacques, Au Clair de la Lune* and *Une Poule*) are all very different and all very worthwhile. The last-named recording was made in 1916, when the singer was 58, yet the fundamental sound of the voice is unchanged, the control in no way diminished. *Ma Lisette* is perhaps the most striking of all the Calvé discs. While in Italy in the Eighties, she learned the art of producing very high, detached tones which correspond in sound to the harmonics of the violin. These tones Calvé used with the utmost skill, when the occasion permitted, and the sustained high D at the end of this song requires Hollywood adjectives to do it justice. *Le Printemps*, which fills the last half of the record surface, is musically far less distinguished than *Ma Lisette*, and the same may be said of the singing. For those who wish to recall Calvé the operatic singer, her *Chanson Bohème* from *Carmen* (Victor 88124) is the most vivid choice.

4. EMMY DESTINN — *Salomé: Jochanaan, ich bin verliebt* (Strauss) (IRCC 16) (Berlin, 1907).
5. EMMY DESTINN — *Der Freischütz: Wie nahte mir der Schlummer* (Weber) (Columbia A5605) (N.Y.C. about 1912).

The outstanding dramatic soprano of the period that ended in World War I was Emmy Destinn (1878-1930). She thrilled innumerable audiences on both sides of the Atlantic, leaving her admirers memories of performances that have remained unsurpassed. Her histrionic ability was impressive, although somewhat restricted in later years by excess weight.

(Continued on page 196)



RECORD NOTES AND

REVIEWS

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.

All prices given are without tax.

Orchestra

ARCADELT (trans. Harl McDonald): *Ave Maria*; and BACH (trans. Lucien Cailliet): *Fugue à la Gigue*; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction of Arthur Fiedler. Victor 10-inch disc, 10-1070, price 75c.

▲ Arcadelt was a famous madrigal composer of the 16th century. Authorities are in agreement that his *Ave Maria* is a spurious work; some say it is an adaptation (first published in 1845) of his three-

part chanson *Nos voyons que les hommes* (1557). As a sacred composition, the *Ave Maria* seems to have found favor with the Catholic Church because we find it included in the repertoire of the Sistine Choir at Rome (a recording of it by the Sistine Choir was included in Victor set 182). McDonald's arrangement of this composition tends to alter its essential 16th-century characteristics into a pseudo-religious intermezzo not far removed from Mascagni's similar composition in *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Those knowing the work in its original choral guise will hardly be receptive to it in this typically 19th-century orchestral arrangement. On the other hand, those who are not disposed toward choral music may very well find this arrangement acceptable and even likable.

Bach's *Fugue à la Gigue* is similarly altered by Cailliet's weighty and inflated orchestral transcription. Mr. Cailliet has always tended to over-orchestration; his knowledge of the modern orchestra is undeniable but his instrumentation can not be said to be always judicious. What he does may be regarded by some as effective, but it can hardly be claimed to be in keeping with the Bachian spirit.

Mr. Fiedler's performances do full justice to the effects and aims of the transcribers; to our way of thinking his is the most admirable contribution to both occasions. The recording is in keeping with the best traditions of the Boston 'Pops'.

—P. H. R.

BACH (trans. Stock): *Prelude and Fugue in E flat maj. (St. Anne)*; played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, direction of Frederick Stock. Victor set M or DM-958, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ During the past century many musicians have attempted to modernize what Wagner called the "wealth, the grandeur" and the "all-embracing significance" of Bach's music by transcribing it for the modern orchestra. The purist decries this sort of thing, but the more liberal-minded feel differently; they say the orchestra is the best medium for rendering clearly the architectural grandeur and details of Bach's music (especially the organ works), if the arrangement is made by one who truly understands Bach. Understanding and realizing a worthy transcription of his music can, however, be two separate things. No one would accuse Schoenberg of not understanding Bach, his is far to great a musical mind, but his transcription of the *Prelude and Fugue in E flat* is a grotesque distortion of the original; it is inflated out of all proportion and orchestrated in a manner that suggests that Schoenberg was more interested in showing off his abilities as an orchestrator than in glorifying Bach's music. I can, off-hand, think of only one similar monstrosity, Henry Wood's grotesque caricature of the *Toccata and Fugue in D minor* (published under the pseudonym of Klenovsky).

Stock's transcription of this music is almost innocuous after Schoenberg's. He follows Bach almost faithfully throughout, except for his final climaxes, and only in one instance — the middle of the fugue, when he turns to the bass drum momentarily to point up a figure — does he depart from the orthodox character of his transcription. There are pages in his treatment of the music where the mood is heightened and sustained in an impressive manner — as in the latter half of the *Prelude* and the opening part of the *Fugue*.

—but on the whole his transcription does not suggest that it will remain alive for me in repetition. The Bach-Busoni arrangement for piano is more interesting to me. Interpretatively, Stock is straightforward, and he reveals an understanding of the broad plan of both compositions. The playing of the orchestra is less persuasive than it might have been, the brass and woodwind choirs frequently showing a lack of tonal security. The reproduction is good. The fact that Stock is no longer with us lends value to this recording from another aspect; undeniably it is a twofold memento of his artistry and as such it deserves our respect.

This *Fugue* is, of course, the same one that Mr. Bonner plays on the Hammond organ in Victor's last month's releases. The organ version is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

—P. H. R.

COATES: *Last Love* (Romance); and *By the Sleepy Lagoon*; played by the Light Symphony and London Philharmonic Orchestras, direction of Eric Coates. Columbia disc 7408-M, price \$1.00.

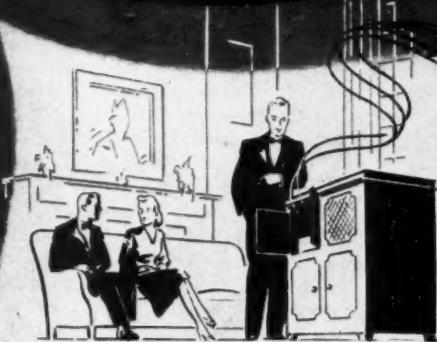
▲ Columbia restores the composer's performance of *By the Sleepy Lagoon* to its catalogue with this release, and adds another selection at the same time. *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, one of the composer's most popular pieces, formed the last side of the old *Cinderella* release (discs 7335/36-M) which Columbia cut out of the catalogue to issue in an album (see last month's review section). *Last Love* is not without its catchy lilt, but it has none of the distinction of tune encountered in *Sleepy Lagoon*. W. R. Anderson, whom we quoted last month on the waltz *Footlights*, thinks that this "romance" is misnamed—"surely this ought to be entitled *Latest—but not Last—Love*." Both compositions are redundant and would have profited by being reduced in size to fit a 10-inch disc. The recording remains satisfactory.

—P. G.

CHAUSSON: *Symphony in B flat major, Op. 20*. Victor set 950.

▲ In our review of this set last month we erred in stating that the Coppola performance was on three discs instead of four like the present set. Several readers

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were kind enough to inform us of our error, which we had realized too late to change. The Coppola set has been unavailable for some time.

Several readers have questioned Stock's use of an organ in the coda of the finale where Chausson calls for horns and trumpets. There seems just reason for Stock's use of the organ at this point because of the manner of scoring, and the conductor undoubtedly felt that he got better results with the organ than with his horns divided. There are a couple of badly muffed horn notes in the performance, and this particular passage is seldom well played. I am told that Stock's use of the organ was not without precedent.

I feel justified in reprinting the following paragraph from a letter of Mr. Henry S. Gerstle's, himself a well known musician: "I have heard (and bought) the new Chausson *Symphony*. I was astounded not only at the interpretation of the score but also at the splendid recording—as fine an orchestral recording as I have ever heard. Stock's performance shows a greater insight into the music than did Coppola's. One remembers Stock's fine performances of d'Indy, Loeffler and Bax, as well as other 'conservative-modern' scores, and wishes he might have recorded some of them." —P. H. R.

DVORAK: *Slavonic Dance in C major, Opus 46, No. 1*, and *Slavonic Dance in D major, Opus 46, No. 3*; played by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, direction of Vladimir Golschmann. Victor disc 11-8566, price \$1.00.

▲ These performances seem a rather pointless duplication when we consider that the Vaclav Talich - Czech Philharmonic Orchestra performances of the *Slavonic Dances* are still included in the Victor catalogue. No one on records has excelled or for that matter approached Talich's buoyant and imaginative exposition of these dances. There are subtleties of phrase and line in the Talich performances suggesting a whole-souled participation, not alone on his part but on the part of every man in his famous orchestra, which is not equalled by any other conductor or orchestra on records. As Irving Kolodin said in his *A Guide to Recorded*

Music, "one can think of no more glorious memorial to any performing group than these gay and melancholy vignettes of Bohemian life." The Czech Philharmonic was one of the greatest orchestras in Europe before the war.

Mr. Golschmann plays both of the dances admirably; there is rhythmic verve and an appreciation of the alternating moods of the music, but there are a few of the charming nuances achieved by Talich. Moreover, the recording tends to be of a heavier body than that attached in the Czech Philharmonic versions. The main point in favor of the present disc, as we see it, is the coupling of the dances. Anyone admiring these two would have to buy two discs from the Talich set (incidentally the disc in the Talich set containing Dances Nos. 3 and 6 has reversed labels). It may well be that those familiar with Mr. Golschmann's performances of these dances over a period of years have requested this recording, in which case it is unlikely that they would care to make a comparison with the Talich discs.

The recording here is at a higher level than in the Talich, but the latter remains exceptionally good.

—P. H. R.

STRAVINSKY: *Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rite of Spring)*; played by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orch. of New York, direction of Igor Stravinsky. Columbia set M or MM-417, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ Goddard Lieberson, writing in Columbia's excellent monthly pamphlet—*Coda*—for March 1944, says of Stravinsky the man that he "never makes you conscious of the fact that you are speaking to a person who is already of historical importance. But you can't meet him without knowing that you have been in touch with a great creative mind." It might be said also that you cannot hear his music without feeling the same way, whether you consider it as being of historical importance or not. You may not like his music but the impression described is nonetheless felt. You may be in disagreement with him on the value of his later-day neo-classicism, but if you are at all cognizant of musical values you cannot help

realizing his importance as a composer. The present score is generally regarded as the culmination of Stravinsky's early style, the logical continuation of *Petrouchka*, carried, however, as Mr. Schonberg said in his review of this set (see issue of October 1940), "to the limits of human ingenuity." Pagan rites have inspired more than one composer, but none have carried the impressionistic mood to the extremes that Stravinsky has. There is more than a suggestion that such frenzied heathens as are depicted here might have been completely bowled over if their celebration of the rite of spring had been really accompanied by the revolutionary sounds and effects that Stravinsky achieves. All literary accounts of heathen rites that I have read have been magnified tremendously by Stravinsky's musical depiction; the effect is similar to using a powerful magnifying glass not alone on the print, but—if it were possible—upon the writer's descriptions.

Not many would care to listen to this score too often; it offers a powerful and stimulating experience which can enervate as well as excite. Almost any music is anti-climactic after it. The essence of the work lies in its opening half; the latter part is built up of frenzied rhythmic patterns which, apart from the performance of the ballet for which Stravinsky wrote the music, often seem futile and meaningless. All listeners interested in modern music should own this set, for Stravinsky's music has proved its importance in the influence it has had on many other composers.

The originality of this score seems to have aroused very little extended comment. Its rhythmical ingenuity and originality remain less debatable than its melodic qualities. There is more than a suggestion that Stravinsky derived melodic material for *Le Sacre* from an aria in Mossorgsky's opera *The Fair at Sorochinsk*, which the Russian tenor Smirnoff once recorded in French — *Pourquoi mon triste cœur* (H.M.V. DB-753). Many of those familiar with the Smirnoff recording have spoken to me of the similarity.

This set has been much praised; no one, except Monteux who recorded this work

around 1930, has achieved plasticity in performance better than the composer. The recording is realistic but not quite as imposing as in the Stokowski set, but Stokowski's treatment of the work is more superficial, the latter part being too disjointed for its own good. This then is the recognized definitive performance on records. And, in view of that fact, it is understandable that Columbia should designate this set as a "Record Classic."

—P. H. R.

TCHAIKOVSKY (trans. Stokowski): *Solitude*, Op. 73, No. 6; and SCHUMANN (trans. Stokowski): *Traumerei*, Op. 15, No. 7; played by the All-American Orchestra, direction of Leopold Stokowski. Columbia disc 11982, price \$1.00.

▲ Stokowski plays both of these transcriptions with the loving care that a young mother might give to her first-born. The lush treatment he bestowed on these pieces both in transcription and in performance is typical of a side of the noted conductor which suggests that he is often a sentimentalist at heart. Perhaps no other great conductor now before the public has as many different facets in his temperament as Stokowski. *Solitude* is a song, which Stokowski has inflated considerably beyond its original scope; in it he stresses that "loneliness of soul" which some writers contend is characteristic of the Russian. Schumann's little piano piece, which comes from his *Scenes of Childhood*, is treated more simply, except for a momentary Wagnerian effect in the middle.

There is undoubtedly a market for this sort of thing, and those who like it will not be disappointed with the recording which is good without being a brilliant achievement.

—P. G.

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BEETHOVEN: *Quartet in A minor, Opus 132*; played by the Budapest String Quartet. Columbia set M or MM-545, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ There are two other performances of this work on records which have long commanded the respect of the musician and the layman alike. They are played by the Lener Quartet and by the Busch Quartet. I do not speak of the older recording of the London String Quartet since the two mentioned definitely displaced it. The Lener set was issued in January 1937, at which time reviewers praised it for the reverential treatment of the score, which was particularly impressive in the "Song of Thanksgiving." The Lener foursome has always been a group of admirable musicians, but through the years they have developed too much of a tendency to over-refine what they play. A tendency to make elegant what is frequently rugged in Beethoven's later works leaves much to be desired in their exposition of this and other quartets; it is not that they lack tonal plasticity but that they do not fully realize the contrasts inherent in the music. This inclination to polish when the beauty lies in roughness results in a nullification of the dramatic conflict so characteristic of Beethoven's later quartets.

The Busch set was issued in November 1938. It was far more enthusiastically received than the Lener set, and many who had bought the latter replaced it with the Busch. I do not think the same thing will happen in this case, despite the fact that the Budapest Quartet surpasses the Busch's on many counts. There is the quality of recording to be considered; the present one is excellently accomplished in many ways, but it tends to coarsen the tone-quality of the ensemble. It lacks the intimacy and warmer string sound that one finds in the older Budapest recordings and in the Busch recording of this work. The Busch reading remains one of the finest quartet performances that that ensemble has given us, a performance in which there is a highly appreciable blending of technical mastery and musical sensibility.

The playing in recent years of the Busch ensemble does not begin to approach what is achieved in 1937 in the recording under discussion.

As we hear the Budapest group here, their performance of the first movement does not reveal the stylistic continuity, the countless subtleties in the opening or the grave beauty of the "Song of Thanksgiving" as fully as some of their concert-hall performances. There are many suggestions of insensitive monitoring on the part of the engineer, which probably accounts for this fact. But another contributing factor, we believe, is the hall in which the recording is made; it does not allow for the type of intimacy which is essential to chamber music. The Busch Quartet is heard to better advantage in both these movements, despite the fact that the Busches tend to protract the famous slow movement, giving the impression of awe-struck veneration. They take five sides where the Budapests and Leners take four. The best exposition of the "Song of Thanksgiving" is found in the Lener set. In the other movements, the Budapests excel on all accounts; there is a greater freedom of expression in their playing of the scherzo, surely one of the most original devised by Beethoven, and their finale definitely soars more.

One wonders, as one listens to the last quartets of Beethoven, which is the greatest, which the most compelling — Opus 127, Opus 131, or Opus 132? Perhaps the old remark attributed to von Bülow, about his favorite Brahms symphony, might be paraphrased here — the most compelling is the one one hears at the moment. One feels, when hearing the A minor, that there cannot be such gigantic spiritual strength elsewhere, such searching, probing beauty and such idyllic elation. But there is, and we encounter these qualities when we return to Opus 127 and Opus 131, though there is little resemblance among these works.

The surfaces of the discs we received were relatively smooth, but they played havoc with a shadowgraph needle. We found chromium the best bet.

—P. H. R.

The American Music Lover

MOZART: *Divertimento in E flat major*, K. 563 (for violin, viola and cello); played by Jascha Heifetz, William Primrose and Emanuel Feuermann. Victor set M or DM-959, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ This, I believe, is the last of the chamber music sets in which the late Emanuel Feuermann participated. What other unusual achievements in chamber music playing we might have gained had he lived can only be conjectured. In my estimation, the most appreciable performances in which Feuermann participated are those of the Schubert *B flat* and the Beethoven *Archduke Trios*. Here, as in the Dohnanyi *Serenade*, one finds that the playing lacks the inherent suavity and intimacy apparent in the earlier recording of this work by the Pasquier brothers. To be sure, each of the players here is superior as an individual performer to the separate members of the Pasquier Trio, but there is not the same uniformity of tone or intimacy of ensemble. There are moments in which we have disturbing evidences of the three different players as virtuoso soloists in their own right. In the quicker movements, the music is played with a virtuoso élan, which while tonally rich and technically proficient, leaves us far too cognizant of the fact that we are listening to Heifetz, Primrose and Feuermann. But while there is not the same degree of selfishness apparent here as in the Schubert and Beethoven works, it must be admitted that this is ensemble playing par excellence, in which a tonal wealth seldom encountered in the concert hall, much less upon records, remains paramount. It is true that this masterly work—one of the greatest of all times for its combination of instruments—can stand virtuoso treatment, yet there are subtleties in this mature music of Mozart which are better conveyed, it seems to me, by a more intimate treatment of the score. One is more conscious of the music of Mozart when listening to the Pasquier Trio's performance; here one cannot quite forget the fact that the players are three of the world's greatest virtuosi.

Although the Pasquier recording is still

listed in the Columbia catalogue, a number of readers have written to us that they have been unable to get it. Hence, this set definitely fills a gap, and I dare-say its chief attribute—that of extraordinary tonal beauty—will establish its appeal with the majority. And, of course, there is the little matter of three virtuoso names—this has a spell over people which no amount of honest musical counselling on the part of others can remove. But in view of the fact that this is great music, splendidly played, one can rejoice that a great many folks are going to become acquainted with this work through the present recording who might never otherwise have come to know it. The magic power of great names, when linked to less familiar music, should not be underestimated. Those who appreciate the finer subtleties of chamber music hardly need counselling—they can judge for themselves.

What of the music? I can only repeat in part what I wrote at the time of the Pasquier Trio release (March 1939). This wholly inspired work, perfection in itself, is quite up to the standard of its composer's last quartets and quintets. Here, in the intimacy of the string trio, it is truly remarkable what varied sound effects Mozart was able to create.

This trio came after Mozart's completion of the *Jupiter Symphony*, and though it was written in troubled times, its general mood, save in the first slow movement (adagio), is one of shining happiness. One wonders about its brightness and seeming peace of soul—did the fact that he wrote the work for his friendly benefactor and brother Mason, Johann Michael Puchberg, account for its elation? Or was it simply the fact that he was

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writing a divertimento raise him from the subjective depths of his three great final symphonies? The occasion that determined the choice and number of instruments is not known. As in previous divertimenti, Mozart divides his work into six movements—an open allegro, two slow movements, two minuets, and a final rondo.

The recording here is excellent. Owing to finer lining, the work is got on four discs in the present set, whereas in the Pasquier version it is contained on five. This fact may, of course, determine many buyers to purchase the present set in preference to the older one. —P. H. R.

Keyboard

BACH: *Triple Fugue in E flat major (St. Anne)*; played by Joseph Bonnet on the Hammond Museum Organ, Gloucester, Mass. Victor disc 11-8528, price \$1.00.

▲ Here is a musicianly account of one of Bach's greatest fugues, but by no means one exploiting the full dramatic possibilities of the music. This fugue is usually associated with the *E flat Prelude*, but Bach did not tie them together. The similarity of the first subject of the fugue to the first line of William Croft's *St. Anne's Hymn* gave rise to the sobriquet by which this work is known in England. Bach, however, did not know the hymntune. Mr. Bonnet plays the fugue as edited by Widor and Schweitzer.

The famous Hammond organ, endowed by the late John Hayes Hammond, Sr., records very well; it does not seemingly present any of the problems that other organ recordings issued by Victor have suggested. There is no disturbing reverberation. In our estimation, the recording could have had more pronounced pedal definition, but this has been a weakness in most commercial organ recordings. However, on many of the inexpensive machines a fuller pedal definition would probably result in a heavy rumble or growl rather than a true organ-pedal tone. —P. G.

ENESCO (arr. Whittemore and Lowe): *Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1*; played by Arthur Whittemore and Jack Lowe (duo-pianists). Victor disc 11-8515, \$1.00.

▲ One cannot help admiring the splendid teamwork of these two pianists; their playing evidences stylistic dexterity and sound musicianship, yet one feels that technical coordination is the dominant factor of their playing and that the emotional element is applied from without. Here they aim for a type of showmanship which serves its purpose in public. On records one feels that Enesco's highly colorful rhapsody in the present arrangement becomes the counterpart of a black and white reproduction of a highly colorful painting. The best one can say is that Messrs. Whittemore and Lowe succeed in creating the impression of an etching, rather than a tame black and white drawing, but one knowing the orchestral version of this work would hardly find this arrangement satisfactory in constant performance.

The reproduction is exceptionally fine. —P. G.

LIAPOUNOFF: *Lesghinska (Caucasian Dance)*, Opus 11, No. 10; played by Alexander Brailowsky (piano). Victor disc 11-8567, price \$1.00.

▲ Sergius Liapounoff (1859-1924), in his piano writing, might be said to have fallen under the shadow of Liszt and others. Albert Lockwood, in his excellent *Notes on the Literature of the Piano*, succinctly states his case: "chief title to consideration is in his Opus 11 (*Etudes d'execution transcendante*); many of the twelve pieces offer problems of charm and variety... *Lesghinska* is flattery paid to Balakirev's *Islamey*. These pieces are all difficult, but the music is rewarding and the passage work so interesting that the hard work is worthwhile."

Lockwood speaks from the performer's viewpoint, but what of the listener's? The uninformed listener, hearing this composition for the first time, cannot fail to be impressed by its virtuoso qualities, by its swift-flowing melodies and its harmonic interplay. But the sinuous character of the melodies and their redundancy

leave the impression that Liapounoff has spun out his material purely for the sake of creating a virtuoso effect. The unrelenting flow of the melodies and the swift pace of the piece must make it almost as difficult to perform as *Islamey*, which some contend is the hardest piano piece in existence. In character the étude is closely akin to an Italian tarantella or a moto perpetuo. Hence, the composition appeals more as a *pièce d'occasion*.

Braillowsky's playing here is clearly articulated; one feels that he has spent considerable time in calculating his effects to create different moods and these he achieves in an admirable manner. The more one hears of this artist on records the more one admires him. The recording is excellent.

—P. G.

REUBKE: *Sonata for Organ in C minor* (on the 94th Psalm) (5 sides); and PURCELL: *Trumpet Voluntary*; played by E. Power Biggs, on the organ in the Memorial Church at Harvard University. Victor set M or DM-961, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Julius Reubke (1834-1858), like the Belgian Lekeu and the Italian Pergolesi, died at an early age after providing evidence of being a composer of unusual promise. Reubke, had he lived longer, might also have been one of the great pianists of the 19th century, since he was a favorite pupil of Liszt and a highly talented executant. Among a distinguished group of Liszt's pupils, including von Buelow, Klindworth, Ratzenberger and Tausig, Reubke went forth from his master "imbued with modern enthusiasms," the fruits of which were substantiated in this sonata, a work long highly regarded in the organ repertory. Although obviously influenced by Liszt, this sonata nonetheless shows remarkable imaginative powers in a youth just out of his 'teens. Harvey Grace, writing in *Grove's*, says that this work is of considerable importance in the history of organ music, "as it undoubtedly led to the composition of a good many important organ works based on a 'programme'." The Sonata is based on nine lines quoted from the 94th Psalm; Grace says that no indication is given of the con-

nexion between the text and the music, but the scheme seems to be as given in the notes by Mr. Biggs, printed in the inside cover of the present set. The sonata is in one continuous movement which falls into three sections. In the recording, Mr. Biggs has wisely divided the movements so that the transition of one section to another does not take place in the middle of a record face. The division is: first section, sides 1 and 2; second section, side 3; and final section, sides 4 and 5.

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WANTED: Anthologie Sonore, complete with booklets, 6 vols. in good condition. Also: Rameau—DM593; Beethoven—DM571; Chopin—Mazurkas—M626, M656, M691; Faure—DM372; Brahms M522; M751; Elsie Houston—M798; Schoenberg—M127; new or used condition. George Seligson, 39 East 60th St., New York 22, N. Y.

AT LAST—Bauer "Historical Records"—complete 35mm. Microfilm Copy. (296 pages)—\$3.00. A. L. Kalman, 4817 N. Fairfield, Chicago 25, Ill.

In his notes, Mr. Biggs mentions Bach in connection with Reubke, which is a mistake even though his is not a comparative reference. Reubke belongs to the romanticists, and his organ sonata is in style closely akin to Liszt's organ music.

Mr. Biggs' performance is one in which scholarly musicianship and taste are well displayed. Although his dramatic approach is more earnest than impassioned, his reading is nonetheless an appreciable one. The organ used in this recording conforms better to the romanticism of the music than would have the Baroque organ upon which Mr. Biggs performs in his Bach recordings. Moreover, it records better, since it has no disturbing outside reverberating qualities.

The familiar *Voluntary* of the Englishman, Henry Purcell, forms an estimable encore.

—P. H. R.

Voice

BRAHMS: *Song of Destiny* (*Schicksalslied*), Op. 54; sung by the Westminster Choir with the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of Bruno Walter (3 sides), and *O Saviour, Throw the Heaven Wide* (*O Heiland, reiss die Himmel auf*) (Motet), Op. 74, No. 2; sung by the Westminster Choir, direction of John Finley Williamson. Columbia set X or MX-223, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Brahmsians have waited a long time to get a complete recording of his *Deutsches Requiem*, one of his most moving works. Since his *Song of Destiny* is often called the "Little Requiem," it comes as a welcome substitute for the larger score. Here we have the deeply stirring romanticism of Brahms, romanticism undisturbed by any efforts to achieve an alien classicism of mood. The poem, dealing with the eternal contrast of life and death, between the sufferings of struggling mankind and the blissfulness of the gods, between, as one writer has put it, "the uncertain and transitory on the one hand and the eternal on the other," is the work of a true romantic poet, Friedrich Hölderlin. Brahms was a true product of his time, and Hölderlin's poem stirred him to the creation

of a tender and moving work. The poem provides opportunities for contrast which Brahms achieved without exaggeration. Actually he glorifies Hölderlin's verses, gives them a timelessness which some may think they do not deserve. Perhaps no one but Brahms could have written this score, which is as essentially German in its poetic sensibility as it is characteristically Brahmsian. The *Song of Destiny* reveals a corner of the German soul which has too long been lost to mankind; its compassion and pity is reflective of a lost era. It sets one to wondering if this side of the German temperament will ever manifest itself or be known again.

Brahms wrote his *Song of Destiny* (1868) just before he wrote his *Alto Rhapsody* and the *Liebeslieder Waltzer*. Only two years previously he had completed his *Deutsches Requiem*. Eleven years separate the *Song of Destiny* from the motet *O Saviour, Throw the Heavens Wide*. Here we find the neo-classical qualities in force; he writes in what has been appropriately called narrow formal limitations. Yet, as Niemann says, his voluntary restrictions of form heighten rather than weaken the spiritual effect. And, over all there "is cast a splendid Bach-like mantle of subtly wrought counterpoint." The manner in which Brahms gives the main thematic line to different voices in the five strophes allows for effective contrast.

Whether these works should be sung in English or not has always been a moot question. Tovey has something to say about this in connection with the *Song of Destiny*; he claims, rightfully, that an English translation is almost certain to result in wrong accents. Since the words are hardly distinguishable, little is gained by the use of an English text in either work.

The Westminster Choir sings with animation and expression; one recognizes the attributes of its conductor, John Finley Williamson. He has always worked for firmness of line, often to the detriment of vocal freedom, but one suspects always with an idea of achieving stylistic results. The fact that few of the English words are distinguishable can be blamed on the composer as much as on the choir

and its director. The same words are not always sung simultaneously by all the voices, particularly in the *Song of Destiny*, and I doubt that the German words would fare better. Bruno Walter brings to his orchestral work the true sensibility of the German soul; one feels he is at home in this music and that he loves it deeply. Williamson attains an appropriate precision of line in the motet.

There is more than a suggestion that the recording presented problems to the engineers, although balance is not predominantly one of these. There is some distortion of orchestral tone and many of the forte passages tend to coarseness. The set that came our way gave us considerable groove trouble and we had to change the needle twice in the middle of a side. Undoubtedly, the recording will show up to better advantage after several playings. The surfaces, although smooth, are apparently on the brittle side, which accounts for the wearing of the needle. Chromium would probably be best, particularly for the first three or four playings. —P. H. R.

WHITMAN: *Leaves of Grass* (Selections); read by Ralph Bellamy. Victor set M-955, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ Recording companies have a way of confusing an issue; here the title of the album is "Ralph Bellamy in Walt Whitman's Immortal *Leaves of Grass*," and in very small type in parentheses "Excerpts." It is misleading to the uninformed, yet—it should be noted—no one familiar with the work would believe that all of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* could be housed on four 12-inch discs. The title here should have been in bold face—*Excerpts from Leaves of Grass*. But this is a small matter. Mr. Bellamy reads his chosen excerpts from Whitman with dignity and simplicity. He has selected lines that are timely, lines that are so applicable to the present day that one has the impression that the poet is alive and speaking for the first time. As William Rose Benét has said: "Amazing is the aptness to the present crisis of certain poems, the poems concerning France and Europe, the poem *To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire* the Broadway pageant through which the swart-cheek'd, two-sworded envoys of



Nippon pass."

Whether Mr. Bellamy's readings will make the words of Whitman live again for the listener in a new and vital manner as Dorothy Parker suggests, depends upon the individual. Since many are now accustomed to the sound of voices over the radio often imparting vital messages reflecting the democratic principles in which we believe, the reproduced readings of Mr. Bellamy may well make Whitman's message more vital and more enduring. Again, one may be too conscious of the reader and find that despite the praiseworthiness of his delivery one does not get from the recordings as much as one gets from reading the poems. It is our belief that these recordings will be widely appreciated by many. One can be grateful that the reader is an American actor whose speech does not suggest the style of the studied elocutionist or highly trained Shakespearean performer; the latter type of individual would be fatal in readings from Walt Whitman.

It is hardly necessary to enumerate the selections here; the contents of the album

can be acquired very easily from one's record dealer. For recording purposes, we are told, Mr. Bellamy decided—after discussion with contemporary authorities on Whitman—that it would be permissible to delete some passages and to reduce others. This we believe has been done in a manner that has preserved continuity and coherence. The text of the poems is given on the inside covers of the album, exactly as presented by the reader. The recording here is not consistently good; the voice is blurred upon occasion. —P. G.

DISC-AND-NEEDLE CLUB

(Continued from page 182)

nostalgic memories.

Our tenth anniversary, on January 14 this year, was a memorable evening esthetically and gastronomically for all of us. It was held at the Kungsholm, and started with smorgasbord in the Danish Room, where all epicurian expectations were fulfilled, and ended in the opera theatre on the top floor, where puppets and Victor records were united in a performance of *Mme. Butterfly*. The opera, seriously presented, was most convincing, the puppets expertly manipulated and the musical coordination well handled.

Perhaps some may think I stress unduly the pleasures attendant upon food rather than upon music, but such is not the case. We have learned that a good supper after a good program of music, and conversely as in the case of the tenth anniversary, leaves everyone happy and contented, and keeps the spirit of good fellowship intact. To quote the 16th-century English poet, John Taylor: "What bread men break is broke to them again." Each succeeding meeting is therefore looked forward to with keen anticipation.

We have at present no unusual plans for the future. Interested readers may have questions that are not answered here. I shall be glad to try to answer any questions which are directed to me.

I should not end this story of the Disc-and-Needle Club without saying that I would like to see the club movement grow in America, and if we of the Disc-and-

Needle can help out in any way—to promote a spirit of true fellowship among folks who desire to hear with others their music from records in the intimacy of their home—we shall be glad to do so.

FIFTY GREAT VOCAL RECORDS

(Continued from page 184)

Her repertoire was exceptionally large and varied. In London she was the favorite *Butterfly* for years, but New York remembers her best as *Aida*, in which opera she and Toscanini made their Metropolitan debuts in 1908.

Destinn's voice was of markedly individual timbre. Always vibrant and full of color, the tone was not perfectly consistent throughout her scale. Often in the lower and middle range there was a peculiar whining quality, sometimes described as nasal, which disappeared as the voice ascended. Some listeners found this inequality rather disaffecting; to others it was part of the Destinn fascination. At any rate, the upper tones rang out with an unfailing fullness and brilliance that was glorious. Her technique was admirable, permitting high, floating pianissimos, trills and other coloratura embellishments. In her prime she seemingly attacked even the most difficult tones without preparation, so spontaneous and certain was her delivery. Thus she could sing with blazing abandon, achieving in records like her excerpt from *Salomé* a breath-taking intensity of expression. This characteristic is most effectively exhibited in her early European records, such as the *Butterfly* arias issued by Victor in the 91,000 and 92,000 series. There was in her singing, too, a womanly tenderness which was the logical reverse of her impassioned intensity, and for this side of her art we turn first to the lovely *Freischütz* air and then to the Victor Mozart and Schubert *Wiegenlieder* that were coupled on IRCC 5012. Another one of the great Destinn recordings is *D'Amor sull'ali rosee* from *Il Trovatore* on Victor 88557 or HMV DB646.

(To be continued)

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